

As a former preschool teacher, I saw in my own classroom that when young children get the attention they need early, they will be miles ahead of their peers on the path to success. I saw the students I had who had been taught to simply raise their hand to ask a question or stand in line to go to recess; they were the ones who were more prepared to tackle a full curriculum when they got to school.

It is not just my personal experience. Study after study after study has made it clear that beginning to educate our children at an early age means they will be less likely to be held back, less likely to require special education, less likely to engage in criminal activity, and ultimately they will be more likely to graduate from high school and earn more.

Investing in preschool is overwhelmingly supported, and it is supported by the American people. In fact, the most recent polls show that over 80 percent of Americans believe we should pursue this across the country. It is strongly supported by the many people who truly understand the impact it will have on the ground.

I have talked to law enforcement officials who said they believe that early education is the key to reducing crime. Business and innovation and education leaders have seen the long-term impact that investing in early education has on our children and on our communities. We have to make these investments in our children and our future and Congress needs to act. Every day we wait is another opportunity lost. These are just a few of the policies President Obama talked about that I am ready to get work on.

The President also talked about the clear need to reform our immigration system, support our veterans and our wounded warriors, reform our bloated and unfair Tax Code, and invest in our Nation's infrastructure priorities. The American people are now expecting their elected officials to work together to tackle those issues, and many more, over the coming months and years.

I am at the table. I am ready to build on that bipartisan foundation we laid with the budget deal, but I am very worried that while the President and many of us in Congress are talking about working together to move the country forward, we have some Republicans who are already talking about dragging us backward into another needless crisis. That is absurd. We went through this just a couple of months ago. There is no reason for Republicans to put this country through this again.

Republican leaders proved at the end of last year that they were not going to actually follow the tea party off the cliff and let the government default. After a lot of drama and partisan posturing and economic pain for millions of families, Republicans dropped their demands and joined Democrats to reopen the government and avoid a default.

Republican leaders have said they are not going to let the country default

this time either, but they now seem unable to stop playing games with this issue to make the tea party happy.

I will be very clear on the floor: Democrats are not going to negotiate over whether the government should pay its bills. If the Republicans continue down this path of empty threats and taking hostages and dangerous demands, they will get exactly what they got last time they tried to play politics with our economic recovery—nothing.

I call on my Republican colleagues to stop working on a wish list of debt limit demands and hostages and stop thinking about the new threats they are going to make to our economy and to the American people and join us at the table to work on the real issues we need to address.

Democrats want to work with Republicans to tackle our challenges fairly and responsibly. That is what the President talked about last night. It is what we are here to talk about today. But as Chairman RYAN and I showed just a few months ago, the way for both sides to get what they want is through compromise and negotiation, not hostage-taking and not threats.

The American people expect us to work together. They want more deals and fewer fights, and I know Democrats are ready to get to work. I am hopeful Republicans will work with us to make this year of action in Congress a reality.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I was privileged to be in our capital city of Des Moines 2 days ago, on Monday, January 27, and I was privileged to visit a lot of my friends in the Iowa legislature. I was in the Iowa House on Monday morning when a resolution was brought up by Representative Dan Muehlbauer and read and adopted unanimously. It was a resolution requesting the U.S. Congress to immediately enact a new Federal food, farm, and jobs bill. I won't read it all, but ultimately I will ask unanimous consent to have this resolution printed in the RECORD. The resolution basically points out how much a farm bill means to our fellow Iowans.

The resolution states:

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives—

That is the Iowa House of Representatives—

that with the reconvening of the United States Congress after its holiday recess, the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate should enact a new food, farm, and jobs bill with all possible speed but no later than January 31 of 2014.

I guess the good news I have now for Representative Muehlbauer and his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the Iowa legislature is that we heard them. Under the great leadership of Senator

STABENOW, we now have a farm bill ready to come to the floor after the House passes it, I hope sometime today. We hope to have it on the Senate floor maybe as early as tomorrow—if not, the first of the week—to get the job done. I think everybody has signed off on it. It is a good farm bill. It has taken a long time and a lot of hard work to get there, but a lot of good people worked together on both sides of the aisle in both the Senate and in the House to get it done. So I thank Representative Muehlbauer and his colleagues for holding our feet to the fire and sending us this resolution.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD House Resolution No. 102.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 102

Whereas, the United States Congress regularly establishes agricultural and food policy in an omnibus farm bill in a bipartisan spirit of cooperation, exemplified by the federal Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-246 which originally was to expire in 2012, but was extended by the 112th Congress in the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-240; and

Whereas, a new food, farm, and jobs bill is critical to maintaining a strong agricultural economy and an abundant food supply that benefits all Americans, including by providing programs relating to farm commodity support, horticulture, livestock, conservation, nutrition assistance, trade and international food aid, agricultural research, farm credit, rural development, bioenergy, forestry, and innovative strategies to revitalize this nation's rural economy by creating jobs in small towns and rural communities; and

Whereas, in Iowa, agricultural producers have faced a multitude of disasters, including drought, flood, and blizzard conditions which have been alleviated by disaster assistance under farm bill programs; and

Whereas, during 2013, the United States Senate and House of Representatives have been engaged in prolonged negotiations to enact a new food, farm, and jobs bill that is now in conference committee which is considering differences between the Senate version, titled the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013 (S. 954), and the House version, titled the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management (FARRM) Act of 2013 (H.R. 2642); and

Whereas, without the passage of a new food, farm, and jobs bill the United States will be subject to previously enacted permanent law, including commodity price support statutes effective in 1949; and

Whereas, the prolonged delay in passing a new food, farm, and jobs bill has created uncertainty for agricultural producers and will negatively impact the nation's overseas trade; and

Whereas, without the immediate passage of a new food, farm, and jobs bill consumers will increasingly suffer economic consequences; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That with the reconvening of the United States Congress after its holiday recess, the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate should enact a new food, farm, and jobs bill with all possible speed but no later than January 31, 2014; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate and the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to the Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the United States Senate, and the Honorable Frank Lucas, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture of the United States House of Representatives; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to each member of the Iowa congressional delegation; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to the Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, as someone who has practiced medicine in Wyoming for about a quarter of a century, and as medical director of the Wyoming health fairs to bring low-cost blood screenings to people all around Wyoming, I have been very involved in the health care issue and in actually helping to provide health care for people.

It was ironic last night during the State of the Union Address to listen to the President talk about health care as if he had some understanding of how it all worked. It became evident to me, sadly, that the President put forth some bold proposals and then came out with a 2,700-page bill that I think many people who voted for never read, didn't understand, didn't know the harm it was going to do to American families, and then the President last night was talking about it in the State of the Union Address in ways that it is actually helping people. It may be helping some, but it is hurting many more. It is not just the Web site. The Web site is the tip of the iceberg. There is huge damage being done to families.

Today I have a letter with me that just came in from a family in Wyoming to talk about how much this is harming this person's individual family. A man from Upton, WY, a small community, somebody who tries to get up every day, go to work, take care of his family, put food on the table. Yet his whole family is being harmed by this law the President has put into place, forced down the throats of the American people on a party-line vote.

So let me start with the letter:

Opening up my insurance letter today has lead me to write you this letter. I'm usually the type of person that just keeps trudging along—

I think all of us have constituents who are like this—

and take things as they come. I'm a long-time resident of this beautiful state and graduated from the University of Wyoming—as so many people have done—

I'm married and have 4 young kids from ages 9 to 3.

He has four young kids ages 9 to 3. He said:

We're a healthy and active family. Non-smokers. Go to doctors for emergency care only. Go to the chiropractor and dentist regularly. I have a high deductible insurance plan.

It is a \$10,000 deductible, which is high. He says he is paying \$584 a month for that. I wish the President of the United States would get letters such as this and read them and understand the impact he is having on people's lives and how much his plan is hurting American families.

Justin writes:

Now, due to the current healthcare climate, I'm going to have to pay \$945 a month.

So he will be paying a lot more. He was paying \$584, now \$945 a month. He says:

And they conveniently raised my deductible to \$11,000.

He had a \$10,000 deductible, which is high. They have raised that, and raised his premiums from \$584 to \$945 a month. He says:

How does Obama expect the middle class to stretch their budgets every month to get healthcare coverage?

That is what middle-class Americans want to know. How does this President expect the middle class to stretch their budgets every month to get health care coverage?

He goes on:

How can we get rid of ObamaCare?

That is a question I was asked repeatedly around the State of Wyoming last week.

This gentleman goes on to say:

Every chance you get, please vote to repeal ObamaCare.

The President last night ridiculed people such as Justin—ridiculed him—saying, Well, sure, vote over and over and over. This man from Wyoming is saying: Every chance you get, vote to repeal ObamaCare.

He also said:

Every chance you get please help the middle class.

Every chance you get, please help the middle class. We are not seeing that from this President, this administration, and those who supported these policies which have hurt the middle class.

He said:

Thank you and I appreciate your leadership for the state of Wyoming. Now I'll go back to working hard to pay my insurance bill, (and probably some for the people that Obama is trying to help.)

Finally he says:

Obama stated to the public that our premiums were not going to rise. Thanks for listening to me rant.

I don't consider what we are hearing from my friend Justin from Upton, WY, a rant. I hear it as a cry for help due to a health care law the President and the Democrats forced down the throats of the American people against their will. Many people who voted for it never

read it, didn't understand it, and I really have strong doubts the President himself understands the health care law, what is in it, and the damage it continues to do to middle-class Americans and families all across this country.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, last night in the State of the Union Message, the President looked at the Congress again and said: You need to be for my plan unless you have another plan, and suggested once again that we have never had other plans. I don't know in a handful of minutes that I can do justice to the other plans out there, but I can tell my colleagues there were other alternatives that were filed in legislation and that were debated in 2009. Clearly, today's experiences, one of which has been shared by a family from Wyoming, would be different experiences if we had looked at those other plans.

Let me very quickly respond to the President when he asked, What are your ideas, and remind him again of what the ideas were that were proposed by people who thought we had the best health care system in the world but thought it could be improved. Some thought there were people who did not have the access they needed and there were rules that could be changed to make a difference. Here is what some of them are.

One idea is to allow small business health plans. Most people get their insurance at work and they like what they have. Eighty-five percent of the people who had insurance last year got insurance at work and well over 90 percent of them thought what they had at work was good and met their needs. For years we have talked about ways to try to expand that so people, whether their association is the farm bureau or some other group they are associated with, where they can, through small businesses or associated health plans, get their health care plan that way, so they too become members of a bigger group that competes for health insurance through that group.

No. 2, expand coverage for young adults. The President said last night that 3 million of the people have been added of the—he thought maybe 12 million; I haven't seen that figure yet. A few days ago Senator REID said it was 9 million people, and a third of the people who had been added did so by staying on their parent's health care a little bit longer. That was the most uninsured group. The only person who filed that legislation in the House as the principal sponsor was me—to let people stay on their insurance. We said age 25, not 26. So I suppose the President added that 1 year to it, or whoever wrote the Affordable Health Care Act. But if that is right—I got the bill out the other day here on the floor—it was 3 pages and 4 lines. If 3 pages have